

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

1 John Chapter 3 — Children of God and the Call to Love

“Children of God and the Call to Love”

Introduction

1 John Chapter 3 is one of the clearest chapters in the New Testament concerning **what it means to belong to God**.

John begins with the amazing love of the Father. Those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ are not merely people who attend church, read the Bible, or try to live a moral life. They are **children of God**.

But being God's child also changes the way we live.

John connects three important truths throughout this chapter:

- **Our identity:** We are children of God.
- **Our conduct:** God's children do not make peace with a lifestyle of sin.
- **Our love:** God's children demonstrate genuine love toward other believers.

John is not teaching that Christians will never stumble or commit sin. Rather, he is teaching that a person who has truly been born of God cannot comfortably make sin the settled direction of his life. The presence of Christ produces a new desire for righteousness.

The chapter also gives us a practical definition of Christian love. Love is not merely something we say. **Love acts. Love sacrifices. Love gives. Love serves.**

Finally, John explains how believers can have confidence before God. When our hearts are troubled, God knows everything about us. When we walk in obedience and love, we can approach Him with confidence because our relationship with Him is grounded in Christ.

I. GOD'S AMAZING LOVE

1 John 3:1 — Called the Children of God

“See how great a love the Father has given us—that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are. The world does not recognize us, because it did not recognize Him.”

John begins with amazement.

He does not simply say that God loves us. He says that God's love has brought us into a completely new relationship with Him.

We are called **children of God**.

This is one of the greatest privileges of salvation. Through faith in Christ, we become members of God's family.

The world may not understand the believer. It may not understand why Christians live differently, believe differently, worship differently, and place their hope in Jesus Christ.

But John reminds us that the world did not recognize Christ either.

Cross References

John 1:12 — “But to everyone who received Him and believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”

Romans 8:14 — “Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.”

John 17:25 — “Righteous Father, the world has not known You, but I have known You, and these people have known that You sent Me.”

Bible Study

Our identity is not determined by what the world says about us.

Our identity is determined by what God says about us.

If you belong to Christ, you are God's child.

That truth should change how you see yourself, how you live, and how you respond when the world rejects your faith.

Spiritual Principle

The greatest identity a person can possess is to be a child of God.

1 John 3:2 — We Shall Be Like Him

“Beloved, we are now God’s children, but it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. We know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He truly is.”

John reminds believers that our present relationship with God is only part of the story.

We are already God's children, but there is a future transformation that we have not yet experienced in its fullness.

When Christ appears, believers will be transformed and will be like Him.

The Christian hope is not simply that life will become easier. Our ultimate hope is the return of Jesus Christ and the glory that will follow.

Cross References

Romans 8:29 — “God decided beforehand that those who belong to Him would be shaped to become like His Son, so that Christ would be the first among many brothers and sisters.”

1 Corinthians 15:49 — “Just as we have carried the likeness of the earthly man, we will also carry the likeness of the heavenly Man.”

Colossians 3:4 — “When Christ, who is your life, appears, you also will appear with Him in glory.”

Bible Study

God is not finished with us.

There is a future glory waiting for every believer.

Today we struggle with weakness, temptation, disappointment, and the limitations of our present bodies. But one day, Christ will return, and those who belong to Him will share in His glory.

Spiritual Principle

The believer's future is greater than anything this present world can offer.

1 John 3:3 — The Hope That Produces Purity

“Everyone who has this hope purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

Biblical hope is not wishful thinking.

The hope of Christ's return should affect how we live today.

If we truly expect to see Jesus, we should desire to live lives that honor Him.

John connects future hope with present holiness.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 7:1 — “Since we have these promises, let us remove everything that makes us spiritually and morally unclean, and let us pursue holiness because we respect God.”

1 Peter 1:15 — “Just as the One who called you is holy, you should also live holy lives in everything you do.”

James 4:8 — “Come near to God, and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and make your hearts pure.”

Bible Study

Grace does not give us permission to live carelessly.

Grace teaches us to desire holiness.

The closer we grow to Christ, the more we should want our thoughts, words, actions, relationships, and motives to reflect Him.

Spiritual Principle

The hope of seeing Christ should produce a desire to become more like Christ.

II. SIN AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

1 John 3:4 — Sin Is Lawlessness

“Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness.”

John does not soften the seriousness of sin.

Sin is not merely making a mistake.

Sin is rebellion against God's will.

Lawlessness means living as though God's authority does not matter.

Cross References

Romans 4:15 — “Where there is no law, there is no violation of the law.”

James 4:17 — “If someone knows the right thing to do and refuses to do it, that person is sinning.”

Romans 7:7 — “Would I have understood what sin was without God's law? I would not have known coveting was wrong unless the law had said, ‘Do not covet.’”

Bible Study

God's Word reveals what sin is.

We cannot properly deal with sin until we recognize sin for what it really is.

The world may redefine sin, excuse sin, or celebrate sin, but God's Word remains the standard.

Spiritual Principle

Sin must be measured by God's Word, not by human opinion.

1 John 3:5 — Christ Came to Take Away Sin

“But you know that Christ appeared to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.”

The answer to humanity's sin problem is Jesus Christ.

Jesus did not come merely to make people feel better about themselves.

He came to deal with sin.

He was completely without sin, yet He gave Himself for sinners.

Cross References

John 1:29 — “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 — “God made Christ, who never sinned, to become the sin offering for us, so that through Him we could be made right with God.”

Hebrews 4:15 — “We have a High Priest who understands our weaknesses because He was tempted in every way as we are, yet He never sinned.”

Bible Study

Jesus understands temptation, but Jesus never surrendered to sin.

His sinlessness qualified Him to be our Savior.

The cross demonstrates both the seriousness of sin and the greatness of God's love.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus did not excuse our sin; He came to save us from our sin.

1 John 3:6 — Abiding in Christ

“Whoever abides in Him does not continue in sin. Whoever continues in sin has not seen Him or known Him.”

John is describing a continuing pattern of life.

A person who truly abides in Christ cannot deliberately make persistent, unrepentant sin the settled direction of his life.

The Christian may stumble, but he does not make peace with sin.

Cross References

John 15:4 — “Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. Just as a branch cannot produce fruit by itself unless it remains connected to the vine, you cannot produce spiritual fruit unless you remain in Me.”

1 John 3:9 — “No one who has been born of God makes sin the continuing pattern of his life, because God's life remains in him.”

3 John 1:11 — “Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil. Imitate what is good. The person who does good belongs to God, but the person who does evil has not known God.”

Bible Study

There is a difference between **falling into sin** and **living in sin**.

The believer may fail, but the Holy Spirit convicts him and leads him back toward God.

Abiding in Christ produces a changed direction.

Spiritual Principle

A changed relationship with Christ produces a changed direction in life.

1 John 3:7 — Do Not Be Deceived

“Little children, don't let anyone deceive you. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as He is righteous.”

John warns believers against spiritual deception.

People can say many things about Christianity, but our lives provide evidence of what we truly believe.

Righteousness is not merely something we claim with our mouths. It becomes visible in the way we live.

Cross References

1 John 2:29 — “If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness has been born from Him.”

Matthew 5:6 — “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, because they will be filled.”

Romans 2:13 — “It is not those who merely hear God's law who are right with God, but those who obey it.”

Bible Study

John is not teaching salvation by human works.

He is teaching that genuine faith produces genuine fruit.

A person's conduct does not purchase salvation, but a transformed life provides evidence that God's work is taking place within that person.

Spiritual Principle

True faith produces visible evidence in the believer's life.

1 John 3:8 — The Works of the Devil

“But the one who practices sin belongs to the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose—to destroy the works of the devil.”

John draws a sharp contrast between Christ and Satan.

The devil works through sin, deception, destruction, and rebellion against God.

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil.

Cross References

Genesis 3:15 — “There will be hostility between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel.”

John 8:44 — “The devil was a murderer from the beginning. He does not stand with the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Hebrews 2:14 — “Because God's children are human beings, Jesus also became human. Through His death He broke the power of the one who had the power of death, that is, the devil.”

Bible Study

The conflict between good and evil is real.

But Satan is not God's equal.

Jesus Christ is victorious.

The cross was not a defeat for Christ. It was part of God's plan to break the power of sin and death.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil and establish the victory of God.

1 John 3:9 — Born of God

“No one who is born of God will continue to live in sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.”

This verse describes the transforming power of the new birth.

Being born again changes a person's relationship with sin.

The believer may still struggle, but he cannot remain comfortable in continual rebellion against God.

God's life within the believer produces conviction, repentance, and a desire for righteousness.

Cross References

1 Peter 1:23 — “You have been born again, not from something that dies, but from God's living and lasting Word.”

John 1:13 — “They were born, not because of human ancestry, human desire, or human effort, but because God gave them new life.”

1 John 5:18 — “We know that everyone born of God does not continue living in sin, because the One born of God protects him, and the evil one cannot control him.”

Bible Study

The new birth is not merely changing our religious label.

It is receiving new life from God.

The Holy Spirit begins changing the believer from the inside out.

Spiritual Principle

New life in Christ produces a new relationship with sin.

1 John 3:10 — The Evidence of God's Children

“This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love his brother or sister.”

John gives two major tests:

Righteousness and love.

A person who claims to belong to God but continually rejects righteousness and refuses to love others gives evidence that something is seriously wrong.

Cross References

John 8:44 — “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to do what your father desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand with the truth.”

1 John 4:20 — “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates his brother or sister, that person is lying. Anyone who does not love someone he can see cannot honestly say he loves God whom he cannot see.”

Matthew 13:38 — “The field represents the world, and the good seed represents the people who belong to God's kingdom. The weeds represent the people who belong to the evil one.”

Bible Study

John refuses to separate love from righteousness.

Christianity is not merely believing certain doctrines.

It is believing Christ and allowing that belief to transform the way we live and treat others.

Spiritual Principle

The children of God are identified by righteousness and love.

III. LOVE ONE ANOTHER

1 John 3:11 — The Command to Love

“For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.”

Love is not a secondary Christian teaching.

It is central to the message of Jesus Christ.

Cross References

John 13:34 — “I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another.”

John 15:12 — “My command is this: Love one another as I have loved you.”

1 John 4:11 — “Dear friends, since God loved us so greatly, we should also love one another.”

Bible Study

The church should be known for truth, holiness, and love.

Biblical love is not weakness.

It is a deliberate decision to seek another person's good according to God's will.

Spiritual Principle

Christians are commanded to love because Christ first loved us.

1 John 3:12 — Cain and Abel

“Not like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. Why did he murder him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's were righteous.”

John uses Cain as a warning.

Cain's problem began in his heart before it appeared in his actions.

His jealousy and hatred eventually resulted in murder.

Cross References

Genesis 4:8 — “Cain spoke to his brother Abel. When they were in the field, Cain attacked Abel and killed him.”

Jude 1:11 — “Woe to them! They have followed the way of Cain and have allowed greed and rebellion to lead them away from God.”

Hebrews 11:4 — “By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. Through faith, God declared Abel righteous.”

Bible Study

Hatred is dangerous because what begins in the heart can eventually appear in our actions.

Cain did not suddenly become a murderer.

Sin was allowed to grow until it produced terrible consequences.

Spiritual Principle

Uncontrolled hatred can grow into destructive actions.

1 John 3:13 — When the World Hates You

“So don't be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.”

Following Christ does not guarantee that everyone will approve of us.

Sometimes faithfulness to Christ will produce opposition.

Cross References

John 15:18 — “If the world hates you, remember that it hated Me before it hated you.”

John 15:19 — “If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. But you do not belong to the world because I chose you out of the world.”

2 Timothy 3:12 — “Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will face persecution.”

Bible Study

We should never seek persecution, but we should not be shocked by it.

Christians belong to Christ before they belong to the approval of society.

Spiritual Principle

Do not measure your faithfulness by the world's approval.

1 John 3:14 — From Death to Life

“We know we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers and sisters. Whoever does not love remains in death.”

John gives another evidence of spiritual life.

Love for God's people is evidence of God's work within us.

Cross References

John 5:24 — “Anyone who hears My Word and believes the One who sent Me has eternal life. He will not be judged as guilty but has passed from death to life.”

Ephesians 2:5 — “Even when we were spiritually dead because of our sins, God made us alive with Christ. We are saved because of His grace.”

John 13:35 — “Everyone will know that you are My disciples if you love one another.”

Bible Study

Love does not save us apart from Christ.

Rather, love is evidence that Christ has changed us.

A person who truly understands God's grace should increasingly become a person who extends grace to others.

Spiritual Principle

Spiritual life produces spiritual love.

1 John 3:15 — Hatred and Murder

“Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.”

Jesus had already taught that murder begins in the heart.

John applies that truth to Christian relationships.

Cross References

Matthew 5:21 — “You have heard that people were told long ago, ‘Do not murder,’ and anyone who murders will be judged.”

Matthew 5:22 — “I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother or sister without cause is accountable before God.”

1 John 2:11 — “Anyone who hates his brother or sister is living in darkness and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.”

Bible Study

Hatred destroys relationships long before physical violence ever occurs.

The Christian must not allow bitterness to become a permanent resident of the heart.

Spiritual Principle

God wants us to deal with hatred in the heart before it produces destruction in our relationships.

1 John 3:16 — The Definition of Love

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.”

John does not define love by emotion.

He points to the cross.

Jesus demonstrated love by sacrifice.

Cross References

John 10:11 — “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”

John 15:13 — “No one has greater love than someone who gives his life for his friends.”

Romans 5:8 — “God showed His love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Bible Study

Christian love is sacrificial.

It asks:

“What can I give?”

rather than:

“What can I get?”

Jesus is our example.

Spiritual Principle

Real love is willing to sacrifice for the good of another person.

1 John 3:17 — Love Meets Needs

“If someone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but shows no compassion, how can the love of God be in him?”

John now makes love extremely practical.

If we see a genuine need and have the ability to help, but deliberately refuse to care, our claim to love is contradicted by our actions.

Cross References

James 2:15 — “Suppose a brother or sister has no clothes and no food for the day.”

Deuteronomy 15:7 — “If someone among you is poor, do not harden your heart or close your hand against your poor brother or sister.”

Luke 3:11 — “Anyone who has two coats should share with someone who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.”

Bible Study

Christian love is practical.

Sometimes love means giving money.

Sometimes it means providing food.

Sometimes it means visiting someone who is lonely.

Sometimes it means helping someone through a difficult situation.

Sometimes it simply means being present.

Spiritual Principle

If we have the ability to help, love should move us toward action.

1 John 3:18 — Love in Action

“Dear children, let us not love with words or speech only, but with actions and in truth.”

This is one of the clearest statements in the chapter.

Words are important, but words alone are not enough.

Love must become visible.

Cross References

James 2:16 — “If someone needs clothing and food and you simply tell them, ‘Go in peace and stay warm and eat well,’ but do nothing to meet their needs, what good is that?”

Romans 12:9 — “Let your love be genuine. Hate what is evil and hold tightly to what is good.”

James 1:22 — “Do not merely listen to God's Word and deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

Bible Study

There is a great difference between saying:

“I love you.”

and demonstrating love through our actions.

The Christian life must move from **hearing to doing**, from **words to actions**, and from **belief to obedience**.

Spiritual Principle

Love becomes credible when our actions agree with our words.

IV. CONFIDENCE BEFORE GOD

1 John 3:19 — Knowing We Belong to the Truth

“This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in His presence.”

John now moves from our relationship with others to our relationship with God.

When we walk in truth, righteousness, and love, we can have assurance that we belong to Christ.

Cross References

John 18:37 — “Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to My voice.”

John 8:32 — “You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

Hebrews 10:22 — “Let us come near to God with sincere hearts and complete confidence, knowing that our hearts have been made clean and our guilt has been removed.”

Bible Study

God wants His children to have confidence in Him.

That confidence is not based on pretending that we are perfect.

It is based upon Christ, God's truth, and the evidence of His work within us.

Spiritual Principle

Confidence before God grows when our lives are surrendered to His truth.

1 John 3:20 — God Is Greater Than Our Hearts

“If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything.”

There are times when our hearts accuse us.

Sometimes conviction is legitimate and should lead us to repentance.

But sometimes we condemn ourselves beyond what God has said.

John reminds us that God knows everything.

He knows our weaknesses.

He knows our failures.

He knows our motives.

And He knows the difference between genuine repentance and false religion.

Cross References

Psalms 139:1 — “Lord, You have searched me and You know me.”

Psalms 147:5 — “Our Lord is great and powerful, and His understanding has no limit.”

John 21:17 — “Lord, You know everything. You know that I love You.”

Bible Study

God knows us better than we know ourselves.

Therefore, when our hearts accuse us, we should bring those accusations before God.

If we have sinned, confess it.

If we have repented, trust His grace.

If our conscience is troubled because of something God has already forgiven, remember that God's knowledge and grace are greater than our feelings.

Spiritual Principle

God's knowledge is greater than our fears, failures, and feelings.

1 John 3:21 — Confidence Before God

“Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God.”

A clear conscience gives spiritual confidence.

This does not mean perfection.

It means that we are walking honestly before God rather than hiding deliberate rebellion.

Cross References

Hebrews 4:16 — “Let us come boldly to God's throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us when we need it.”

Hebrews 10:22 — “Let us come near to God with sincere hearts and full confidence, because our hearts have been cleansed from guilt.”

Romans 8:1 — “There is now no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.”

Bible Study

The Christian does not approach God as a stranger.

We approach Him as His children.

Our confidence is not based on our own perfection. It is based on Christ's finished work and our relationship with Him.

Spiritual Principle

Because of Christ, God's children can approach their Father with confidence.

1 John 3:22 — Obedience and Prayer

“And we receive from Him whatever we ask, because we keep His commandments and do what pleases Him.”

John connects prayer with obedience.

This does not mean God becomes obligated to give us everything we ask for.

It means that a believer who is walking closely with God will desire things that are consistent with God's will.

Cross References

John 15:7 — “If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask for what you need, and it will be done for you.”

Matthew 7:7 — “Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened.”

John 8:29 — “The One who sent Me is with Me. He has not left Me alone because I always do what pleases Him.”

Bible Study

Prayer is not a method for manipulating God.

Prayer is relationship.

As we walk with God, His desires increasingly shape our desires.

Spiritual Principle

The closer we walk with God, the more our prayers should reflect God's will.

1 John 3:23 — Believe and Love

“And this is His commandment: to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as He commanded us.”

John summarizes God's command in two directions:

Faith toward Christ.

Love toward one another.

Christianity is built upon both.

Cross References

John 6:29 — “The work God wants from you is this: believe in the One He has sent.”

John 13:34 — “Love one another as I have loved you.”

John 15:12 — “This is My command: Love one another as I have loved you.”

Bible Study

We must not separate faith from love.

We believe in Jesus, and because we believe in Jesus, we love His people.

Faith changes the heart.

A changed heart changes relationships.

Spiritual Principle

True faith in Christ produces genuine love for others.

1 John 3:24 — Abiding Through the Spirit

“The one who keeps His commandments lives in Him, and He in them. And this is how we know that He lives in us: by the Spirit He gave us.”

John concludes the chapter by returning to the theme of abiding.

The Christian's relationship with Christ is living and personal.

God has given His Spirit to His people.

The Holy Spirit provides evidence that we belong to God and works within us to produce obedience, conviction, and spiritual fruit.

Cross References

John 14:23 — “Anyone who loves Me will obey My teaching. My Father will love that person, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”

Romans 8:9 — “If God's Spirit lives in you, you belong to Christ. If someone does not have the Spirit of Christ, that person does not belong to Him.”

1 John 4:13 — “We know that we live in Him and He lives in us because He has given us His Spirit.”

Bible Study

The Christian life is not lived through human strength alone.

The Holy Spirit lives within God's people.

He convicts us when we sin.

He leads us toward truth.

He produces spiritual fruit.

He helps us understand God's Word.

He assures us that we belong to Christ.

Spiritual Principle

The Holy Spirit is God's continuing presence and witness within the believer.

V. KEY LESSONS FROM 1 JOHN 3

1. God's Love Makes Us His Children

God's love does more than forgive us.

Through Christ, He brings us into His family.

Our greatest identity is not found in our occupation, possessions, reputation, accomplishments, or failures.

Our greatest identity is found in Christ.

2. The Christian Should Desire Holiness

Those who belong to Christ should not become comfortable with sin.

We may stumble.

We may struggle.

We may fail.

But our desire should be to get back up, confess our sin, and walk with Christ.

Holiness is not the price of salvation; holiness is the fruit of a life surrendered to the Savior.

3. Jesus Came to Destroy the Works of the Devil

Satan is real.

Sin is real.

Spiritual warfare is real.

But Christ is greater.

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil.

The believer's confidence is therefore not in personal strength but in the victory of Jesus Christ.

4. Love Is Evidence of Spiritual Life

John repeatedly connects salvation with love.

A Christian cannot claim to love God while continually hating God's people.

Love is one of the great marks of spiritual life.

5. Love Must Be Demonstrated

John does not allow us to define love merely by words.

Real love gives.

Real love serves.

Real love sacrifices.

Real love notices needs.

Real love acts.

6. Hatred Must Not Control the Heart

Cain shows us how destructive hatred can become.

What begins inside the heart can eventually become visible in our actions.

Therefore, believers must deal with bitterness, resentment, anger, jealousy, and hatred before those things produce greater destruction.

7. Christians Should Expect Opposition

The world hated Christ.

Therefore, believers should not be surprised when following Jesus brings rejection.

Our responsibility is not to gain the world's approval.

Our responsibility is to remain faithful to Christ.

8. God Knows Our Hearts

There will be moments when our hearts accuse us.

But God knows everything.

He knows our failures.

He knows our motives.

He knows our repentance.

He knows our struggles.

Therefore, we should bring everything honestly before Him.

9. Obedience Strengthens Confidence in Prayer

John connects obedience with confidence before God.

A believer who walks closely with Christ learns to desire what pleases Christ.

Prayer becomes less about demanding our will and more about seeking God's will.

10. The Holy Spirit Gives Assurance

The presence of the Holy Spirit is evidence that we belong to Christ.

The Spirit works within us and leads us toward righteousness, truth, obedience, and love.

VI. THE GREAT CONTRAST OF 1 JOHN 3

1 John 3 places two ways of living before us.

The Way of Christ

- Righteousness
- Love
- Obedience
- Sacrifice
- Truth
- Compassion
- Fellowship with God
- Confidence before God
- The work of the Holy Spirit

The Way of Sin

- Lawlessness
- Hatred
- Deception
- Rebellion
- Selfishness
- Lack of compassion
- Opposition to God
- The works of the devil
- Spiritual death

John's message is clear:

The person who belongs to Christ should increasingly look like Christ.

VII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“REAL LOVE IS SEEN, NOT MERELY SAID”

1 John 3 teaches us that Christian love must become visible.

Jesus did not merely tell us that He loved us.

He went to the cross.

He did not merely speak about sacrifice.

He sacrificed Himself.

He did not merely speak about compassion.

He demonstrated compassion.

Therefore, Christians must ask:

Can people see the love of Christ in the way I live?

Can they see it in how I treat my family?

Can they see it in how I treat fellow believers?

Can they see it in how I respond to people who disagree with me?

Can they see it in how I treat those who are struggling?

Can they see it when someone needs help?

Can they see it when forgiveness is difficult?

Christian love becomes powerful when people can see Christ through our actions.

VIII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 John 3 gives us several questions for personal examination.

Ask Yourself:

- 1. Do I understand that I am a child of God through Christ?**
- 2. Is my hope in Christ's return affecting the way I live today?**
- 3. Am I becoming more sensitive to sin?**
- 4. Is there a sinful pattern in my life that I have been refusing to surrender to God?**

5. Is there someone I claim to love but consistently treat with bitterness or hatred?
6. Do my actions demonstrate the love I claim to have?
7. When I see someone in genuine need, do I respond with compassion?
8. Do I allow the world's rejection to discourage me from following Christ?
9. Do I have confidence before God because I am walking in fellowship with Him?
10. Am I allowing the Holy Spirit to lead my life?

IX. THE SPIRITUAL PROGRESSION OF 1 JOHN 3

1 John 3 gives us a powerful spiritual progression:

1. We Are Loved

God's love makes us His children.

2. We Are Transformed

Those who belong to Christ begin to desire righteousness.

3. We Reject Sin

Sin is no longer something we willingly embrace as a lifestyle.

4. We Love Others

The love of Christ begins to affect our relationships.

5. We Serve Others

Love moves beyond words and becomes action.

6. We Obey God

Love for God produces a desire to please Him.

7. We Gain Confidence

Walking with God produces greater confidence in His presence.

8. We Depend Upon the Spirit

The Holy Spirit confirms that Christ lives within us.

X. FINAL APPLICATION

1 John Chapter 3 brings us back to a fundamental question:

Does my life demonstrate that I belong to Christ?

John does not tell us to look merely at what we say.

He tells us to look at the direction of our lives.

Do we desire righteousness?

Do we hate sin?

Do we love God's people?

Do we care about those who are hurting?

Do we forgive?

Do we serve?

Do we obey?

Do we desire to please God?

These things do not earn salvation.

Rather, they demonstrate the transforming work of salvation.

The message of 1 John 3 is not that Christians are perfect.

The message is that **Christians have been changed.**

We have been brought from darkness to light.

We have been brought from death to life.

We have been brought into God's family.

We have been given the Holy Spirit.

And because Christ has changed us, our lives should increasingly reflect Him.

The world may not understand us.

The world may reject us.

The world may hate us.

But we know who we are.

We are children of God.

And because we are His children, we are called to live like His children.

We are called to walk in righteousness.

We are called to reject the works of the devil.

We are called to love one another.

And we are called to demonstrate that love through our actions.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the amazing love You have shown us through Jesus Christ.

Thank You that through faith in Christ we can be called Your children.

Help us to understand the greatness of that privilege and to live in a way that honors Your name.

Help us turn away from sin and pursue righteousness.

When we stumble, lead us to repentance.

When we are tempted, give us strength.

When the world rejects us, give us courage to remain faithful.

Remove hatred, bitterness, jealousy, anger, and unforgiveness from our hearts.

Teach us to love our brothers and sisters.

Help us not to love only with words, but with our actions.

Show us people who need encouragement, compassion, forgiveness, help, and love.

Make our lives a visible testimony of the love of Jesus Christ.

When our hearts condemn us, remind us that You are greater than our hearts and that You know everything.

Give us confidence to come before You in prayer.

Teach us to obey Your Word and desire the things that please You.

Thank You for the Holy Spirit who lives within Your people and reminds us that we belong to Christ.

Help us to walk in truth.

Help us to walk in righteousness.

Help us to walk in love.

And help us to live every day as children of God.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Key Verse

“See how great a love the Father has given us—that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are.” — 1 John 3:1

Central Truth

Those who have been born of God should demonstrate their new life through righteousness, obedience, and genuine love for others.

1 John 3 in One Sentence

Because God's love has made us His children, we should turn from sin, walk in righteousness, love one another, and demonstrate the character of Christ through our lives.